

D&D Fiction

Old Salt Tales

Stormwrack Fiction, Part 2
by Joseph D. Carriker, Jr.



Josen stood at the railing, scowling at the horizon, a smear of dark gray-black contrasting with the rest of the deep blue sky.

"Ah, bit of a storm ahead, it seems," said the squeaky voice next to him. Josen looked down at the gnome Farhan, and nodded.

"Shouldn't be a problem, should it?" the boy queried, the worry just barely showing through his voice. "I mean, you control the wind and everything, right?"

The gnome chuckled.

Normal: Survival is normally used to predict the weather.

"I wouldn't say control, exactly, lad," Farhan said. "More like I've got a bit of sway. It still does what it likes - I just talk sweetly to it sometimes."

"Oh, like with the captain," Josen smiled, looking back out at the incoming storm. The gnome laughed out loud. The lad had been here only a few weeks and had a better idea of how things worked on this ship than most of the crew. He'd go far.

"Something like that," Farhan said. "Though storms are dangerous, lad. Nothing to be trifled with. Especially if the sea itself bears dangers."

I can recall a time when I was a youngling, many a year ago. Before I found myself a ship as nice as the *Deeptide Lady*, you understand. I was serving as a hand aboard the *Iron Stalwart*, a big name for a ship just a bit smaller than this one.

One thing you'll learn about ships, boy, is that you never give them a name that Old Lady Blue can take as a challenge, you know? The sea is the mistress hereabouts, and she takes challenges quite seriously.

So it was with the *Iron Stalwart*, captained by a buffoon of a paladin, by the name of Sir Moldren. Moldren was a nice enough fellow, mind, but not a true sailor. His order had come into possession of a ship, however, and they decided they needed a presence on the high seas - to right wrongs and the like. So, Moldren gathered up a like-



New Feats: Old Salt

You are an old hand at shipboard life, having mastered the myriad skills that are required of the experienced sailor. Additionally, you have an eye for the weather.

Prerequisites: Profession (sailor) 5 ranks.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Balance, Profession (sailor), and Use Rope checks. Additionally, you can use a Profession (sailor) check to predict the weather (as described in the Survival skill on page 83 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Normal: Survival is normally used to predict the weather.

mindful band of do-gooders and set out to bring righteousness to the waves.

Of course, that was just the thing for an adventurous young bard such as myself. Inexperienced as I was, though, I decided to just hire on as a hand; Moldren's crew was, as a company, fine adventurers, far better at sword- and spell-play than I. But, as I learned, I had a skill that none of them could lay claim to.

That is, the ability to actually sail a ship.

So, I was of much more value to them as a sailor than as a member of their adventuring company, but they taught me bits of lore here and there, and sometimes let me accompany them ashore. Well, all of that came to a crashing end when we found Shatterhull Isle.

Now, I was below decks that evening when the storm hit. I'd set myself up a hammock near the roof of the hold, and was lounging there, trying not to laugh at poor Sir Moldren's case of the seasick. He did all right with such things usually, but this storm was a doozy. While I lay up there, gently swinging as if rocked by me mum, he was hiding in the hold.

The last thing I remember is hearing a crash, and thinking the great fool had lost his balance and fallen over. But suddenly there was blackness and water and howling winds everywhere, punctuated by stone and flying splinters of the hull.

We'd just learned why the isle was called Shatterhull.

Well, I awoke to the sounds of crunching, the sensation of sun on one side of my face and wet sand on the other. I lay there for a bit, trying to figure out where I was and how I got there, when I heard creatures speaking a language I didn't recognize. Their voices were deep and gravelly, and didn't sound in the least bit friendly. Cautiously, I opened my eyes, ever so slightly, and saw that those voices belonged to big, hulking brutes.

You'll find, lad, that this sort of luck is precisely the kind that runs through my career. I mean, I've heard stories of other sailors being shipwrecked and ending up in the care of beautiful mermaids or kindly sea-elves. But old Farhan?

Ogres.

So surprised was I by this, that I squeaked my fear before I could stop myself. The two ogres looked up from the wreckage - I think they were surprised to see someone still alive, so I took advantage and fled, as quick as my legs could carry me.

Now mind you, I'm not the fastest runner - few gnomes can make



New Places: Shatterhull Isle: The Island of Witches

Off a storm-torn coast lies Shatterhull Isle. When terrible storms arise, ships are often driven against its terrible rocky shore, spilling their contents for the hags called the Daughters of Mahogra.

Shatterhull Isle is an adventure site suitable for characters of 5th to 7th level.

History of Shatterhull Isle

Shatterhull Isle has not always been the danger that it is now. For many years, it was simply another barren island off the coast - dangerous to approach, certainly, but easily avoided by ships with no reason to go there. All that changed, however, with the coming of the Daughters of Mahogra.

that claim. However, they gave me enough of a head start. Quick as a wink, I dropped behind a boulder while the ogres were still getting their feet under them. Then, I clambered atop, as they came pelting towards it. The ogres split up, hoping to sneak up on both sides of me around the boulder, and as they did so, I slithered down the boulder's opposite face and sneaked my way over to the wreckage that washed ashore.

I was pretty clever for a bit, but, to be honest, there are only so many places to hide on that horrid island. It didn't help any that in a short time not only were the ogres after me, but also the witches who ruled the place. Oh, I stayed ahead of them for a bit, of course, not really thinking how I would get off this island, or what I would eat or anything like that. No, it was all just survival for a bit.

The blasted thing was, wherever I hid, the ogres kept finding me! I quickly used up my magics, too - I was a much less accomplished magician then than I am these days - and was soon using naught but my wits to keep ahead of them. Now mind you, an ogre on a good day isn't likely to outwit a gnome on a bad one, but still they kept finding me. I had just dived into my latest hiding spot, tucked among three outcroppings - sure to keep me safe for a while - when the voice of one of the witches called out, as it had nearly every other time before.

"There he is!"

Well, I cursed - a sailor's prerogative, you know - and was about to leap out into another run, when I saw it. On an outcropping that overlooked most of the area, tucked into a small crevice, was a reddish stone of some kind. Now, I would have ordinarily ignored such a thing, except for one thing.

The stone blinked at me.

Several decades ago, the ancient sea hag Mahogra was slain by a heroic party of aventi, merfolk, and aquatic elf adventurers, ending the threat to their homes that she had presented. Though Mahogra was slain utterly, her three daughters (Ambraga, Kurula, and Gakara) escaped the assault. In time the three of them found themselves drawn to this desolate and remote island, pulled there by dreams of their mother calling to them from the stormlashed craggy shores.

After a period of threatening one another and other such power ploys, they consecrated their sisterhood anew, forming the Daughters of Mahogra, a true covey of sea hags. The powers they gained from joining together were great and terrible indeed, and they immediately put these new powers to work for them. In the years since, they have sought to gather wealth and power, with the ultimate goal

of making the adventurers who slew their mother pay for their temerity.

To that end, the Daughters of Mahogra use their covey powers to lure ships to their doom on the razor-sharp rocks that surround Shatterhull Isle. They gather up the loot from such ships and barter it away for magic and other treasures, while allowing their ogre servants to feed on the crew.

I leapt to me feet and clambered up the outcropping to lay hands on it. It was cemented in place with some kind of glue made from ground up shells or something gritty like that, but I managed to tear it free. I glimpsed into its depths, and Old Lady Blue take me if three old withered hags didn't stare back!

Well, I hucked that stone deep into the brine, let me tell you, and as I did, those old witches gave a great cry of anger from their cave overlooking the rest of the island.

Mind you, boy, doing that felt quite good right then at the time, but it was probably the dumbest thing I could have done, because it angered those old biddies. First, more ogres came boiling up out of that cave, but not just more normal ogres. No, these were shambling, dead things.



Well, with everything after me, I did the only thing any sane gnome could do - I decided to take my chances with the ocean. So, I sprinted for the nearest shore and leapt into the water. But I didn't get beyond my collarbone in depth, before I had to stop in shock, as a man - clad in gleaming silver plate and wielding a massive sword of the same gleaming metal, with a trio of pearls set into the hilt - rose up out of the water, his hand raised to halt me.

Witches. Ogres. Zombie ogres. And now, a sea-knight.

Suddenly, the gnome looked up from his story as the first fat raindrops hit them in the face. The world was gray and the wind beginning to blow fiercely.

"More story later, lad!" he yelled, pushing the boy in one direction and starting to run in the other. "Batten down the hatches! There's a storm upon us!"

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